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T H R O N E

Upon the Account of

R E L I G I O N.

(Only)

By WILLIAM FLEETWOOD,

Late Lord Bishop of Ely.



L O N D O N:

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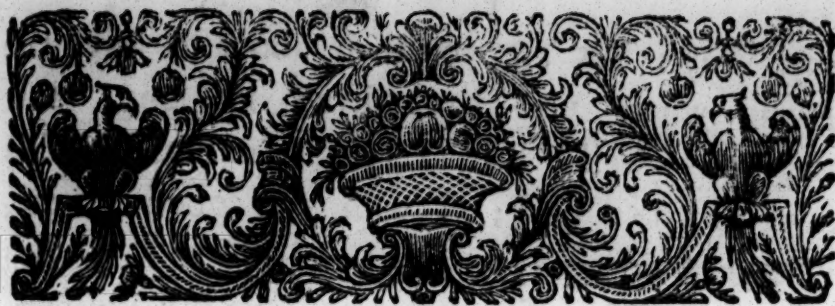


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T H R O N E

Upon the A C C O U N T of

R E L I G I O N.

Parishioner.



O O D-morrow, worthy Sir; having received a great many civil Favours at your Hands, and profited (as I thought) very much under your Ministry, I come to return you my hearty Thanks, and to take my Leave of you.

Minister. You are very welcome, Sir, to any Thing I have done, or may do for you in

my Way : But are you then about to leave the Parish where you have lived so long, and thriven so well ? But every one understands his own Business best ; I wish you good Success, wherever you go.

Parish. No, Sir ; I do not leave my Business, nor my Parish ; but I must come no more to your Church.

Minist. I am very sorry for that, because you have been hitherto a constant Man at coming, and very well behaved when there : What is the Matter, pray ?

Parish. Why truly, Sir, to speak plain, I am now told you are *no Minister of Christ*, your Sacraments *no Sacraments*, your Prayers an *Abomination* : You are a *Schismatick*, and all who communicate with you are involved in the Guilt of that most dreadful Sin.

Minist. Is that the Case ? Hard Fortune certainly, that I, whose Duty it is, and whose hearty Desire it is, to forward the Salvation of every Soul within my Parish, should be the Cause of their Damnation, and yet neither they nor I should know a Word of the Matter !

Pray tell me how I came to be a Schismatick.

Parish. Why, by holding Communion with the late Bishop of *London*, who was a Schismatick.

Minist.

Minister. And how came he to be a Schismatick ?

Parish. By holding Communion with Dr. Tillotson, who was an *Intruder* into the Archbishoprick, which was full before with Dr. *San-croft*, who was unjustly *deprived* by Act of Parliament for not taking the Oath of Allegiance to King *William* and Queen *Mary*; and there is the whole of the Matter.

Minist. So that, by this Account, all the *Bishops* in *England*, who held Communion with an intruding Archbishop, became Schismatics; and all the *Clergy* in *England*, who held Communion with those Bishops, became Schismatics also; and all the *People* of *England*, who held Communion with those Clergy, were, in like manner, Schismatics. Is not that the Way by which this Leprosy was conveyed throughout the Kingdom ?

Parish. Yes, Sir, it is the very same; and a sad Thing it is to consider it.

Minist. Sadder it may be than you think for. There are in *England* alone six and twenty Bishops, about twelve thousand Clergymen, and about seven Millions of People; *six* of which, at least, are, by this charitable Scheme of yours, involved in the Guilt of this great destroying Sin of *Schism*, and in the Consequence of that, not in a State of Salvation, without repenting and returning to the Church of *Nonjurors*.

Parish. Sir, I am told that *I am not to mind Consequences*, let those look to it who will venture them.

Minist. *Not mind Consequences*, when the Salvation of so many Millions of our Fellow Christians is so highly concerned? Why is any Doctrine rejected, but for the absurd or impious *Consequences*, that would follow, were it admitted? And does it not indeed startle you, that Six Millions of Christians should lie under the Weight of God's Eternal Wrath, meerly because the *Bishops* would hold Communion with Dr. *Tillotson*, who was put into Dr. *Sancroft's* Place, and the *Clergy* would hold Communion with those *Bishops*, and the People with those *Clergymen*? What Notions can you have of God Almighty's Justice, or his Goodness, that can believe he has made the Salvation and Damnation of a whole Kingdom to depend upon the wrong or right Judgment they shall make, *who is the true Archbishop of Canterbury*, He who is deprived by an Act of Parliament, or he who is put into his Place? Can you believe in earnest, that the Souls of my Parishioners should all of them go to Hell, for coming to my Church, joining with me in Prayer, hearing me preach, and receiving the blessed Sacrament at my Hands, meerly because I happened to think it my Duty to honour and obey my old Diocesan, own his Authority, and follow his Directions, altho' he held Communion with the *new-made* Archbishop?

Parish.

Parish. Ay, but he was no Archbishop, there wanted a sufficient Authority to make him so.

Minist. Are all the People of the Kingdom then obliged to inquire into, to understand and to determine, on the Peril of their Souls, precisely what the Rights and Titles of Princes are? For what Causes they may fall from their Dignities? Who may take Cognizance of their Male-administrations? And who may fill their Seats when they are empty? Are these made any of the Terms of Men's Acceptance with God? Or may they not be very innocently mistaken in these doubtful Matters, which have, for so many hundred Years, both exercised and divided the ablest Writers? Are not Kingdoms as much at liberty to secure themselves from utter Ruin and Destruction, as private People are to defend themselves from Violence and Robbery? If a Prince will have his private Will, to the Subversion of the Laws, Invasion of the People's Rights and Liberties, and tearing to pieces the Constitution, must every one stand still, and let him take his Course, and finish their Destruction, without opposing his unjust Attempts? I will make short Work of it. If King *James the Second* was not to be opposed, the Nation must have been undone, the Laws and Liberties, and the Religion of the Country must unavoidably have been made a Sacrifice to Popery. And has the good God so declared it in his Word, that Sixty Hundred Thousand People must be as miserable

in this World as Men can be, if they withstand not a Popish King's Design to make them so? Or be condemned to everlasting Misery in the World to come, if they do withstand him? Can you believe this is the State into which the great Creator has himself put them?

Those who perverted you, did very well to bid you *not mind Consequences*; for if you should, they durst not affirm such Things, as in their easy Consequences must charge God with being most unjust and cruel. Well, if King *James* be no longer King, what must the Nation do? For a King it must and will have.

Parish. Why then they should have chosen his Son, and have preserved the *Hereditary Right*?

Minist. You are, I see, not thoroughly converted to your Party yet; for, by their Principles they could not have submitted to the Son, during his Father's Life. But what was the Reason, why King *James* could be no longer King? Why, it was because he was a *Papist*, and, *as such*, thought he was obliged, and did resolve in his Mind, and did accordingly endeavour in all his Actions, to root out the Protestant Religion; and because the Laws of the Land were all against him, and secured to the People their Rights and Privileges and sundry Liberties, which stood much in his way, therefore he attempted by all the ways he could, to subvert and overthrow those Laws; and certainly he would have quite subverted them, and utterly ruined the Constitution, had he not been

been hindered and put by : And all this he did *as a Papist*, by Principles common to him with *all Papists else*. And therefore the new King, Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons of *England*, all in Parliament assembled, disabled, disinherited, put by, and for ever excluded *all Papists* from being Kings or Queens of these Kingdoms ; because being possessed with the same Principles, they would, whenever they had opportunity, attempt the same thing, namely the rooting out the Protestant Religion, by subverting the Laws, and overthrowing the Constitution.

Parish. Why then, by the same Reason, a *Popish Kingdom* might exclude a *Protestant Line* from succeeding to the Crown for ever, though next of Kin.

Minist. I make no question but they may, if they can alledge the same Causes, with the same Truth and Reason. I doubt not but a *Turk* may as innocently and lawfully torture and kill a *Christian*, to make him turn *Turk*, as a *Christian* may torture and kill a *Turk* to make him turn *Christian*. If the *Popish Kingdom* can affirm and prove, that the Principles and Practices of the Protestants are truly such, and have constantly been such, as are utterly inconsistent with the Peace and Safety of the Kingdom, the Security of their Religion, Laws, and Properties ; if this can be as justly and truly affirmed of Protestant Principles and Practices, as it can of Popish ones, then it is plain that a *Popish Kingdom* may as honestly

honestly and justly exclude a Protestant Line from succeeding to its Crown, as a Protestant Kingdom may exclude a Popish Line.

Parish. But why should any one lose his Right, for being of such or such a Religion?

Minist. Why not for *Religion*, as well as any other Vice, or Defect, if that Religion threatens as much Mischief, and does as much as any other Vice, or Defect? How can a Man help being born an *Idiot*, or how can he help the being a *Madman*? And yet you would not think much of excluding such People from Government. Now if a Man's Religion be such as makes him either useless as an *Idiot*, or mischievous as a *Madman*, why should not Religion be punished by Exclusion as well as Idiocy or Lunacy? Religion is not only in itself the best thing in the World, but it is a Word of so good Sound, that 'tis hardly ever mentioned without Approbation and good liking, till you join something to it that is *bad*. Leave out therefore the Word *Religion*, and let the Question be, Why should a Man lose his Kingdom, who is persuaded that he *ought*, and is resolved that he *will*, whenever he obtains that Kingdom, subvert the Laws of it, and destroy all things that shall stand in his way, and hinder him from bringing all his People to think, say, and do, whatever he himself thinks, says and does, in what he calls *God's Service*, by any violent and forcible means whatever?

Put

Put the Question thus, and you will quickly see (if this be the Religion of the Prince) why a Prince may be excluded for his *Religion* as well as for any other Cause whatever. It is, in truth, for the Mischiefs his Conscience puts him upon doing, for the cursed Methods his Religion obliges or permits him to take, that he is deservedly excluded. And after all the Noise and Outcry that is made, *What pity it is, that a Man should suffer such Loss for being of another Religion*, I believe there is not a Father in *England* who would not disinherit his Son, if he should renounce his Christianity and turn *Turk*, let the Son pretend *Conscience* never so much for so doing, and say he is persuaded that *Mahomet's* Religion is the truest; especially if this good Son should declare himself obliged, by his new Religion, to persecute and destroy his Father, and all the Family, if they would not do as he had done, whenever he had Power and Opportunity. So that it is but a meer *Cheat of Words* that People put upon themselves and others, when they say that no Man ought to suffer either in Goods or Person for *Religion's* Sake; unless that Religion be in itself *pure* and *peaceable*, such as will do no Mischief to Mankind, nor allow any to be done; it must hinder no Justice; it must dispense with no Oaths, nor break any Contracts, nor disturb Society, nor countenance or abet any Cruelty. For such a Religion as this, no body ought to suffer, because it does not hurt but promote the Good of

of Mankind. But when what a Man calls his *Religion* shall put him upon doing, or allow him (unchecked) to do the same, or as bad things, as they who are unjust, unmerciful, seditious and rebellious do, why should not such a religious Man be punished as the others are? Government is as certainly and as much of God, as Religion itself (even the pure and true Religion) is; and Government may as honestly and lawfully overrule the necessary Articles of Faith, as Religion may overthrow the necessary Maxims of Government. And therefore the Pretences of the one are never to be admitted, to the real Damage of the other. To do no Injury either by Fraud or Violence, to administer Justice, to observe Oaths, to stand to Compacts and Agreements, are such eternal Rules of Reason and Right, that Religion itself can give us no better; and if it gives us *any other*, to their Prejudice, we are sure it is not of God, nor ought to be received of Men.

Now, if this be the Religion of a Popish Prince with respect to a Protestant Kingdom, or of a Protestant Prince with respect to a Popish Kingdom, so that each of them shall think himself at Liberty, notwithstanding all his Engagements, Oaths, and Obligations to the contrary, to break through all their Laws and Liberties and Privileges, to vex, oppress, torment and kill those Subjects that will not by fair Means embrace the Religion of their King; if this be the Prince's Religious Persuasion, do you not see there is as much

much Reason and Justice for excluding a Prince for *his Religion*, as there would be for excluding a Prince for doing all these enormous Wickednesses *without Religion*, or any Pretence to it? I never could consent that a *Bill of Exclusion* should pass against *James Duke of York*, merely because he held the Pope of *Rome* to be the *Supreme Head* of the Church of *England*; and believed *Transubstantiation*, and *Purgatory*, and prayed to *Saints and Angels*, and was a bigotted Papist; because I thought that *Princes* could no more help their Follies and Mistakes than other People; and because I thought that I myself ought not to be punished for believing and practising in Matters of Religion, just contrary to what he did. But when I considered with myself, and knew very well, by my Reading and Observation, that by the Principles of Popery, he must and did hold himself bound to use all the Means he possibly could, not only to persuade, allure and encourage me, by fair Means, by Hopes and Promises of Advantage, to profess and practise as he did, but by foul ones also, by Threatnings and violent and forcible ways, even to the putting me to Death by the Torments of Sword and Fire, when once he could obtain the Power of doing so, and could use that Power, without endangering himself, his Person and Dignity; then I readily consented to *the Bill of Exclusion*, and would never have had him possessed of the Power of undoing me, of forcing me, (^{or} ~~and~~ destroying me,) to profess Popery,

ry, if I would live in my own Country; because I was morally assured, that when once he had the *Power*, he must be made to have *the Will* to use that Power, to the Destruction of the Protestant Religion. The House of *Lords*, indeed at that Time were of another Mind, and threw out the Bill, either trusting to his Humanity and good Nature, or else persuaded that whenever he came to the Crown, his Interest and his Oaths would assuredly carry it against his Principles, and the Persuasions of his *Confessor* and Priests, who are usually the great Incendiaries of Princes on these Occasions. Many of those Lords lived to see themselves mistaken in their Reasoning, and their good Opinion of him; and found by many mischievous Experiments, that neither good Nature, nor true Interest, nor Oaths, are to be trusted against Religious Principles and Persuasions, when once they have taken full Possession of the Mind. *Good Nature* is reckoned as a Weakness, when it thwarts a Religious Principle; and *Interest* is never to stand in Competition with Religion; and never did an *Oath* oblige to Sin; and therefore never can oblige a Popish Prince to tolerate Heresy, when he can safely root it out by Force and Violence: The Lords, I say, at that Time, would not believe these Consequences would certainly follow, from their admitting a Popish Successor; but they were convinced by Experience, that they both would and did follow; and therefore they afterwards agreed with the *Commons*, that the
 Throne

Throne was *vacant*, and to fill it with the Prince and Princess of *Orange*; and in a little Time after excluded by Act of Parliament *all Papists* from inheriting the Crown for ever, declaring——
They have found it utterly inconsistent with the Safety and Welfare of it, for this Protestant Kingdom to be governed by a Popish Prince.

Which is a Demonstration that the *Parliament* of *Great Britain* believes, judges, and declares that Popery, with its easy, natural and usual Consequences, does incapacitate a Prince for wearing the Crown of a Protestant Kingdom; for what was it, I would fain know, that put that Prince upon endeavouring to extirpate and subvert the Protestant Religion, but his Zeal to propagate his Religion that was Popish? What was it that put him upon endeavouring to subvert the Laws and Liberties of this Kingdom, but his Zeal for Popery, because those Laws and Liberties were the Security of the People, and hindered him from propagating Popery? For if those Laws and Liberties were not manifestly and principally endangered by the Prince's being a Papist; (as such) what need was there of an Act of Parliament, expressly to exclude the Succession of any *Papist*, but rather to exclude *any one* that should endeavour to subvert their Laws and Liberties, whether Papist or Protestant? There was indeed no need of such an Act, if they had not taken it for granted, that whoever was a *Papist*, would unquestionably endeavour to subvert the Laws and Liberties
of

of a Protestant Kingdom, as he had Power and Opportunity of doing it. In a Word, *Papish* Princes are excluded, not because their Religion is erroneous, foolish, superstitious or idolatrous, but because it is a false Religion, and a cruel Religion, and will not permit them to keep the Promises they have made, and the Oaths they have taken to their People, if those People are *Protestants*, and those Oaths are in favour of the Protestant Religion, and they are in a Condition of breaking them, *i. e.* if they can break them without running any Hazard. Nor is it only (for these Reasons) a *false* Religion, but 'tis a *cruel* and inhuman Religion also; it spills the Lives of Men, like Water on the Ground; makes light of putting Men to Death, with the most exquisite Pain and Torments, who are in all respects innocent and harmless, excepting that they are not *Papists*.

So that let Protestants be never so obedient Subjects to a *Papish King*, let them do their civil Duties never so well, pay all their Taxes never so justly and exactly, nay, fight his Battles never so valiantly and successfully, and fill their Places in the Commonwealth never so laudably and usefully, yet if they will not turn *Papists*, the *Church* will accuse and convict them of Heresy, and the civil Magistrate must execute them by Fire, or Sword, or Gibbet.

And after knowing all this, how absurd must it be to hear People complaining of the Hardship and Injustice of putting by a Prince from the Throne, *merely for his Religion?*

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